



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 3 December 2025

by H Miles BA (hons), MA, MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 19th December 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/C3620/W/25/3373185

Carinya Leatherhead Road, Great Bookham, Surrey KT23 4RR

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) against a refusal to grant planning permission.
 - The appeal is made by Mr Brian Wales of Bryden Homes Ltd against the decision of Mole Valley District Council.
 - The application Ref is MO/2024/1850/PLA.
 - The development proposed is demolition of the existing bungalow and erection of 2 no semi detached dwellings to the front and a single detached dwelling to the rear.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. I have taken the description of development from the decision notice as this clearly and succinctly describes the development proposed.
3. During the appeal process revised plans were submitted which show changes to internal arrangements so that plot 1 and 2 would be 3 bedroom dwellings, and plot 3 would be provided with three car parking spaces. These would be minor amendments, and in the circumstances of this case, the parties would not be prejudiced if I were to consider these documents, and I will take them into account.

Main Issues

4. The main issues are
 - The effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the area.
 - Highway safety, with particular regard to car parking.
 - The effect of the proposed development on biodiversity.

Reasons

Character and Appearance

5. This part of Leatherhead Road is mainly characterised by detached dwellings set in large plots with clear gaps between the buildings. Properties have large front gardens with soft landscaping providing greenery to this streetscene and there are open fields opposite. This results in a spacious pattern of development. The existing building is a single storey dwelling set back from the boundaries with a generous front garden. Although it is lower in height than the majority of the

houses in this area, these features contribute to the property making a positive contribution to the spacious character of the area.

6. The Built Up Areas Character Appraisal - Bookham and Fetcham Supplementary Planning Document (2010) (SPD) identifies this site as being within the East Bookham and West Fetcham area. Of relevance to this appeal, it identifies its characteristics as including houses set back behind well maintained front gardens. Lateral separation between buildings creating a strong sense of spaciousness. House plots mostly of regular size/spacing. As well as a level of tree cover and spaciousness typical of “leafy” Surrey. This is broadly in accordance with my findings and, for the reasons above, Carinya makes a positive contribution to these characteristics.
7. There are a number of cul de sacs which lead from Leatherhead Road to infill development and dwellings which do not front this main road. There are detached and semi detached properties to Walnut Tree Close (LPA ref MO/2009/1345). Some of these are smaller plots albeit the more closely spaced dwellings have their frontage to Walnut Tree Close. In addition, Beech Tree Close (LPA ref: MO/2011/0715/OUT, MP/2011/1448/RM), Briarbank Close (LPA ref: MO/2018/0597) and High Acre Close (LPA ref: MO/2016/0001) are nearby, with what appears to be development occurring on the site identified as Silverdale and Highgarth (LPA ref: MO/2023/1665). Whilst there are a handful of semi detached houses, these are uncommon and do not form part of the overriding character of this area and these developments generally maintain the spacious pattern of development of properties fronting the main road.
8. There is a dwelling to the rear of the neighbouring North Downs House which is accessed via a shared driveway running alongside the host property (LPA ref: MO/2017/0922). Although this introduces a driveway, it maintains a generous single dwelling to the main road frontage.
9. As such, overall the prevailing character along this part of Leatherhead Road is of single dwellings in large, landscaped plots resulting in an attractive sense of spaciousness in this area.
10. The proposed development would replace the existing building with a single dwelling to the rear of the plot and two to the front. The properties to the front would be two storey semi detached houses. Unit 1 would be 1.4m from the side boundary and unit 2 would be a similar distance from the access road, with a further 4.8m to the boundary. They would have an area for parking and turning to the front in permeable tarmac and grasscrete. A gated access road would run alongside unit 2 to the dwelling to the rear.
11. The built form would be tight to the side boundary. Whilst there would be separation between the building and North Downs House, the introduction of the gated access along this side of the plot would contribute to a developed appearance across the full width of the site. Furthermore, the semi detached layout of units 1 and 2 would result in adjoining properties which are closely spaced by their nature and these would be in narrow plots in this setting. Their front garden areas would also be dominated by the hardstanding and car parking. Whilst the trees to the frontage are shown to be retained, the development would nevertheless be clearly visible in views through the access. Taken together, these features would lead to the development appearing cramped in this context. This

would harmfully undermine the important spacious characteristics of this area. The creation of high quality places is fundamental to what the planning process should achieve and the harm in this regard is serious.

12. My attention is drawn to planning permission for a similar layout of three properties, with two semi detached dwellings fronting the road at Church Road (LPA ref: MO/2025/0437). However, this is some distance from the appeal site and I do not have evidence that satisfies me that the character and appearance of that particular area is comparable to that before me now.
13. Consequently, the proposed development would be harmful to the character and appearance of the area. As such, it would be contrary to policies EN4 of the Mole Valley Local Plan 2020-2039 (2024) (LP) and policy BKH2 of the Bookham Neighbourhood Development Plan 2015-2026 (2015) (BNDP). These require that development, including infill and garden development, must be high quality design that makes a positive contribution to local character
14. Policy BKEN1 of the NP mainly relates to trees and hedgerows and therefore the policies set out above are more relevant to this main issue.

Highway Safety

15. Together policy INF2 of the LP and policy BKH3 of the BNDP set minimum parking standards of two car parking spaces for three bedroom dwellings and three car parking spaces for four bedroom dwellings in this location.
16. The amended plans submitted during the appeal process show two car parking spaces for the three bedroom houses and three car parking spaces for the four bedroom house. This would align with the local requirements set out above. As such, the appeal scheme would be unlikely to lead to overspill parking on street. Consequently, there would not be harm to highway safety in this regard.
17. Therefore the proposed development would have an acceptable effect on highway safety, with particular regard to car parking. As such, the development would be in accordance with policy INF2 of the LP and policy BKH3 of the BNDP, the aims of which are set out above.

Biodiversity

18. There is a national requirement for a biodiversity net gain (BNG) of 10% for certain development, which is a statutory requirement set out in legislation. Policy EN9 of the LP sets a local requirement that this scheme should demonstrate BNG of at least 20%. The higher percentage was justified through the recent examination and adoption of the development plan policy. As such, although the local plan requirements exceed the statutory 10% BNG, based on the evidence before me, this is justified and the policy is consistent with the National Planning Policy Framework (2024) (Framework) which seeks net gains for biodiversity, but does not quantify the amount. I have therefore taken it into account in my decision.
19. Nevertheless, BNG can be delivered through on site, off site measures or biodiversity credits, and such an approach is included in the Council's suggested pre commencement condition on this matter. This would be an appropriate mechanism to confirm whether the development meets the 20% biodiversity gain objective. Therefore, I am satisfied that this condition could be successfully discharged and indeed development could not be begun until a Biodiversity Gain

Plan is approved. As such, it would be inappropriate to dismiss the appeal on the grounds that the biodiversity net gain objective would not be met.

20. Therefore, the proposed development would have an acceptable effect on biodiversity. Consequently, it would be in accordance with Policy EN9 of the LP, the aims of which are set out above.

Other Matters

21. The parties agree that the Council can demonstrate a 5 year supply of deliverable housing sites, with around a 5.1 year supply. Whilst this is close to the 5 year amount, paragraph 11 d) of the Framework and the presumption in favour of sustainable development is not engaged.
22. The proposed development would provide an increase of two homes in an accessible location within an existing settlement, and the social and economic benefits of this. Whilst I have not identified harm with regard to biodiversity or highway safety, this is a neutral matter which does not weigh in favour of the appeal scheme. Taking all the above into account, these would result in modest benefits in favour of the appeal scheme. However, these would not outweigh the serious harm to character and appearance identified above.
23. There have been amendments to the appeal scheme compared to previously refused applications on this site including the reduction in scale and size of the rear dwelling. However, I have assessed the appeal on the basis of the details before me now and I nevertheless find the proposed development to be harmful for the reasons set out above.

Conclusion

24. The proposal conflicts with the development plan and the material considerations do not indicate that the appeal should be decided other than in accordance with it. Therefore, for the reasons given above the appeal should be dismissed.

H Miles

INSPECTOR